



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE
DEPUTY SECRETARY

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Contact: Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director
Phone: (505) 827-0314

Environment Department to Host Environmental Community Forums

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will be holding a series of five public meetings, or juntas, on environmental and quality-of-life issues facing communities along the border region from January 11 through January 20.

In November, NMED and Doña Ana County held a Colonias Environmental Issues Summit in Las Cruces, attended by federal, state and local officials, as well as community members, that established the framework for the more community-oriented juntas that will focus on specific, local issues. The forums are part of NMED's efforts to address environmental justice issues in underserved communities as directed by Governor Richardson's Environmental Justice Executive Order, signed in November 2005.

"Governor Richardson has committed to tackling key environmental issues along the border that will improve the quality of life for communities that often lack critical infrastructure and have otherwise been largely underserved," NMED Secretary Ron Curry said. "These forums are an opportunity for these communities to tell us what needs fixing and what the priorities should be. We will be there to listen and then take action on the most doable projects."

Issues raised at the Summit in November that will likely be addressed at the juntas include:

- Enforcement of regulations pertaining to solid waste, liquid waste and mobile homes;
- Improved coordination and communication between local, state and federal agencies and communication with communities;
- Lack of drainage and flood control in colonias communities; and
- Increased opportunities for communities to have a voice in the permitting process for various proposals.

All juntas will start at 6:30 p.m. The times and locations for each meeting is as follows:

- January 11, San Jose Catholic Church, 353 Josephine Street, La Mesa.
- January 12, Organ Community Center, 58820 Second Street, Butterfield/Organ
- January 18, Vado Community Center, 180 La Fe Avenue, Vado/Del Cerro
- January 19, Radium Springs Community Center, 12060 Lindbeck Road, Radium Springs
- January 20, Chaparral Community Center, 190 County Lane, Chaparral

For more information, contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.